

The eggs of the **Canarian (or Meade-Waldo's) Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus meadewaldoi***

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Hockey (1996) stated that the eggs of the probably Extinct *Haematopus meadewaldoi* Bannerman, 1913, are undescribed and, by implication, unknown. Even in the most comprehensive work on avian eggs, the *Handbuch der Oologie* (Schönwetter & Meise 1962: 373, Meise 1988: 258–259), no such egg is mentioned. In fact there is an egg, probably the only one, in the collection of Dr Wolfgang Makatsch (Fig. 1). It does not, of course, look any different from any other oystercatcher *Haematopus* egg. Oystercatcher eggs are oval to elliptical, pale yellowish stone to clay buff in colour, blotched, spotted and streaked brown and black. They are distinctive and unlike those of other waders, but the eggs of the different *Haematopus* are similar, except those of Magellanic Oystercatcher *H. leucopodus*, which appear consistently slightly darker in ground colour.

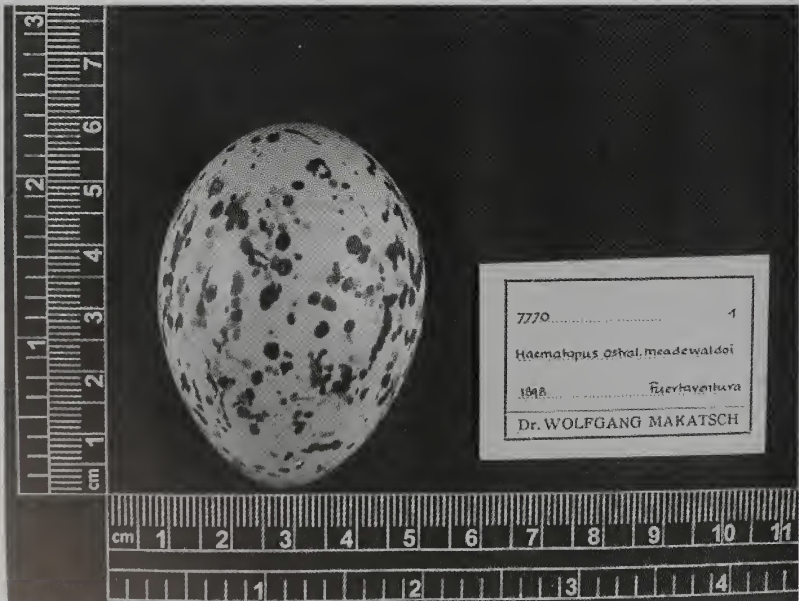


Figure 1. Egg of *Haematopus meadewaldoi*, in the Staatliches Museum für Tierkunde, Dresden (Christiane Quaiser)

The Natural History Museum (NHM, Tring) has a file on the Makatsch collection that contains seven images of this egg. According to correspondence between Dr Makatsch and the then curator of eggs, MW (following Makatsch's visit to Tring), dated 16 December 1982, Makatsch acquired the egg on 4 January 1950 with the egg collection of Dr Ludwig Huhn (d. 1949) at Bautzen. The egg, in good condition and signed by the collector (probably Ramón Gómez), was offered for exchange to the NHM. Subsequent correspondence with Christopher Swann (who sponsored Makatsch's visit to Tring) indicates that, following Makatsch's death, the collection was bequeathed to his grandson Christoph Schnabel. Walters wrote to Schnabel on 10 September 1984 suggesting the exchange as per the arrangement with his grandfather, or that the egg be deposited in a German museum. Makatsch (1906–83), was a famous ornithologist in the former East Germany, known not only for his egg collection but for field guides and other works on birds and eggs. His was one of the largest private egg collections in Europe (c.32,000 eggs in 16,000 clutches of 1,200 species). In the 1990s the collection (including the egg in question) was purchased (through the late Siegfried Eck) by the Staatliches Museum für Tierkunde, Dresden, Germany, where it remains. Data relating to the egg of *H. meadowaldoi* is on two record cards in Makatsch's acquisitions catalogue: Makatsch collection no. 7770: one clutch of one egg; Fuerteventura, Canaries; 1898 acquired on 4 January 1950 with the egg collection of Huhn (signed no. 1094). Measurements: 54.5 × 38.8 mm; 3.67 g (i.e. smaller than typical eggs of *H. moquini*, as was predicted would be the case by Bannerman 1963). The taxon was named for Edmund Gustavus Bloomfield Meade-Waldo (1855–1934) who collected the holotype.

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